

REMARKS

A final rejection of all pending claims was mailed on December 5, 2007. The claim amendments above accompany a request for continued examination (RCE) filed on April 7, 2008. In the amendment above, Applicants have amended claims 1, 3-7, 9, 15, 17-21, 23, 29, 31-35 and 37; and have canceled claims 2, 16 and 30. As such, claims 1, 3-15, 17-29 and 31-42 are pending. Applicants respectfully request continued examination of the pending claims in view of the amendments above and the following remarks.

Examiner Interview Summary

Applicants thank Examiner Dunham for the courtesies extended in a telephonic examiner interview conducted on April 7, 2008. The undersigned attorney, Stephen Schaefer, participated on behalf of the Applicants. In the interview, a proposed amendment to claim 1 was discussed. Examiner Dunham indicated that the proposed claim amendment appears to set forth differences from the cited U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0046201 to Cheyer, but that the Examiner would need to perform an additional search.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC 102 and 103

In the final Office Action mailed December 5, 2007, claims 1-3, 6-8, 15-17, 20-22, 29-31 and 34-36 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as anticipated by Cheyer (US 2003/0046201). Of these, claims 1, 15 and 29 are independent claims. The remaining dependent claims 4-5, 9-14, 18-19, 23-28, 32-33 and 37-42 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cheyer in view of other references.

Without conceding the correctness of the claim rejections and to advance prosecution on the merits, Applicants have amended each of the independent claims 1, 15 and 29, to define more particularly the subject matter sought to be patented. Other dependent claims have been canceled or amended for consistency. The claim amendments add no new matter. Support for the amendments appear in the specification as originally filed, for example, in paragraphs 13, 15-16 and 18 (regarding the definitions recited in the claims of the claimed internal and external

directories); Figures 2A-2C and associated description in paragraphs 17-18 and 24-28 (regarding the electronic purchasing process recited in the claims); and originally filed claim 2 and paragraphs 19-23 (regarding the recited partner interface protocol).

Applicants submit that each of the pending independent claims 1, 15 and 29 defines subject matter that is patentable over Cheyer, as do the pending dependent claims.

With respect to claim 1, for example, Cheyer does not disclose or suggest a “method of conducting an electronic purchasing process” that includes the combination of elements recited in claim 1. For example, Cheyer does not disclose or suggest a method that includes the combination of the following elements:

- initiating an electronic purchasing process on a purchasing computing system having an internal contact directory hosted by a service provider of the purchasing computing system;

- establishing communication, by the purchasing computing system, with an external contact directory of suppliers and information relating to the suppliers, the external contact directory hosted by an external service provider that is not the service provider of the purchasing computing system;

- sending a request from the purchasing computing system and to the external contact directory, the request identifying a user-selected one of the suppliers included in the external contact directory;

- receiving, in a format compliant with a partner interface protocol, a response from the external directory and at the purchasing computing system, the response including information relating to the selected supplier;

- parsing the information in the received response;

- creating, using the information parsed from the response, a new business partner entry in the internal directory, the new business partner entry for the selected supplier; and

assigning the selected supplier as a source of supply in the in the purchasing process.

In addition, claim 1 is not rendered obvious by Cheyer. The extension of a partner interface protocol to external directory services, so that external directories can be easily and usefully used by procurement personnel in assigning sources of supply, is an important improvement over prior purchasing systems including Cheyer, and is an improvement that is neither disclosed or suggested by Cheyer.

Accordingly, claim 1 is patentable over Cheyer. In addition, the references cited in connection with various dependent claims do not overcome the deficiencies of Cheyer vis-à-vis claim 1. As such, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1 and 3-14 be withdrawn.

Independent claim 15 is directed to an article, and independent claim 29 is directed to a system. Claims 15 and 29 are patentable over Cheyer and other cited references for the reasons discussed above in connection with claim 1, as are dependent claims 17-28 and 31-42. As such, Applicants also request that the rejection of claims 15, 17-29 and 31-42 be withdrawn.

Conclusion

Applicants submit that all pending claims 1, 3-15, 17-29 and 31-42 are in condition for allowance, and respectfully request that a notice of allowance be issued.

It is believed that all of the pending claims have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue or comment does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue or comment. In addition, because the arguments made above may not be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this paper should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper, and the amendment of any claim does not necessarily signify concession of unpatentability of the claim prior to its amendment.

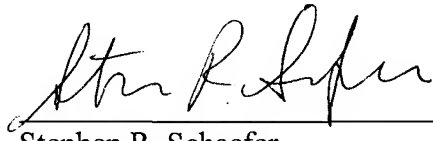
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Examiner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 06-1050 \$120 for the required extension of time fee and \$810 for the Request for Continued Examination fee. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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